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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION Q MIDDLE EAST - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Friday morning's Yomiuri front-paged the GOJ decision Thursday to extend its sanctions on North Korea, which expire on April 13, by another six months.

1. "Changing Diplomatic Environment in the Middle East"
The business-oriented Nihon Keizai editorialized (4/6):
"Israeli Prime Minister Olmert proposed peace talks with Arab nations in response to the adoption at the recent Arab Summit meeting of the 'Riyadh Declaration,' which seeks comprehensive Middle East peace. Iran released the 15 British troops it held captive, averting a flare-up with the US and Britain over its nuclear development. Diplomatic efforts are underway to prevent the Middle East from becoming more unstable. The international community should take this opportunity to accelerate its support, which would encourage stabilization in this region.... Although the differences between Arab nations and Israel are still great, it is significant that the Arab Summit leaders proposed a 'resumption of sincere and direct talks' with Israel, while asking the UN, US and EU nations to join working group meetings proposed by the 'Riyadh Declaration....' Saudi King Abdullah, the initiator of the 'Riyadh Declaration,' reportedly mediated between main PLO factions and Hamas in February, while asking Iranian President Ahmadinejad in early March not to take a provocative diplomatic stance toward the West. Although Ahmadinejad had initially taken a hard-line stance regarding the capture of the British troops, the Iranian leadership turned to a diplomatic settlement of the issue earlier than expected. Behind Tehran's diplomatic move was a bid to avoid becoming isolated from the world community, as the UN made moves to tighten sanctions. The diplomatic environment is changing in the Middle East."

